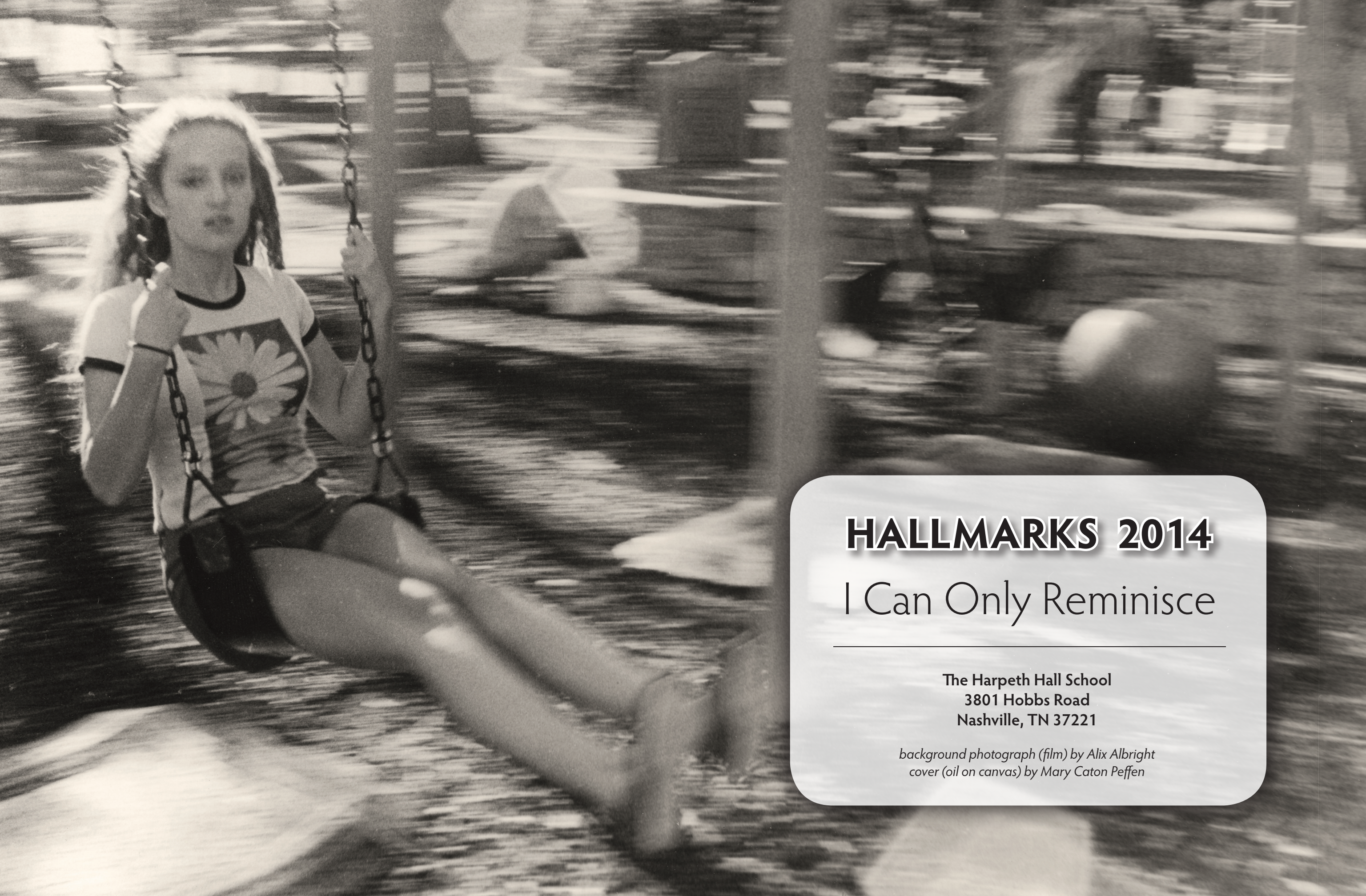




HALLMARKS 2014

literature and art from the harpeth hall school



HALLMARKS 2014

I Can Only Reminisce

The Harpeth Hall School
3801 Hobbs Road
Nashville, TN 37221

*background photograph (film) by Alix Albright
cover (oil on canvas) by Mary Caton Peffen*

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hand-colored photo •
Ellie Davidson
— gouache and
colored pencil on
paper (opposite)
• Betsy Buzhardt



color photo
• Izzy Essary

section 1

Youth

Through the Walls

Annie Stevens

I see the teenager in my brother
On a daily basis
Too cool
For his parents
Too tired
For meaningful conversation
Too busy
For me

He loves his friends
And his video games
Enjoys his privacy
And his quiet room
Mumbles his words
Constantly
Mostly because
He is unsure of them

I think he hides
Because he is trying to
Figure it all out
And come out alive on the other side

Occasionally, though,
I get a glimpse into his secret world when
I hear him singing in the shower
And I am reminded that
He is still my little brother
Just with a little more height
A little more muscle
And a little less certainty

This is the Beginning

Reagan Alley

This is the beginning

safe and warm
swallowed in the darkness
i am a heartbeat

This is the beginning

bloody cries
blinding white
cold and clean and callous,
the sour sterile walls wrapped in their knowing smiles

This is the beginning

Stumbling through mysteries,
sticky fingers and scabby knees
Dreading the dark at the top of the stairs
and dancing on sunlight, my feet brown and bare
innocent

This is the beginning

Fear
Of rejection
Of failure
Of not fitting in
Of simply missing my chance (to get out?)
This place is a landmine and I've yet to perfect the deadly dance.
I trip across mistakes, stumbling into myself—the dark parts, damp and dripping—
only to run until my heartbeat becomes the rain



oil on canvas • Reagan Alley

and the ground falls from my feet
and I feel only the nothingness

I try to break out of my cellophane cast
I see lights in an infinite sky, shadowing a moonlit ocean
I see sun pounding the cracked earth, leaping across green river currents
I close my eyes and I hold my breath and I try to become the beauty,
to surrender self eternally and just bleed into the canvas of this moment,
but when I open them, I am still here
and the moment is lost forever.
Trees, birds, wind, rain—life spinning constantly around me—

why can't i wake up?

Twelve years of our lives peeled slowly from us, but are we any wiser?
They say that we are,
those people
those men and women who hand us the knowledge, signed and stuffed neatly into a folder,
rolled and tied with a red ribbon
It is proof
Proof that we didn't waste our youth
Proof that we didn't thrust away our potential
or close any doors
or lose sight of our future
or worst of all,
worst of all, empty ourselves into God-forsaken frivolity
It is proof
Proof that we make ourselves
The Almighty American creates his own fate!
Proof that we break ourselves
failing when we make success our only choice
It is proof

Shreds of the person I dreamt I would be
Litter the floor of my imagination
Wasted
Time

Slowly now, gravity pulling me back to my home
Under the sun under the sky under the drifting clouds
Under the grass that holds me like chains in a depth-darkened prison
Alone in the quiet, the shattering quiet
swallowed in the darkness
i am a heartbeat

This is the beginning

The Inner Workings of a Sewn-on Smile



Brianna Bjordahl

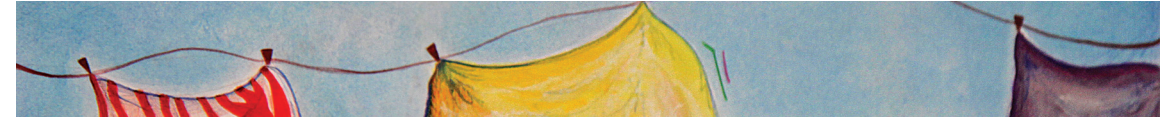
The other day I was thinking about my own toys:
The ones I haven't played with in years,
The ones sitting on the shelf with the memories and dust mites,
And I couldn't help but wonder
What deeper emotion,
What inner turmoil,
What tortured thought,
Lies behind their placid, sewn-on smiles,
Their stoic, glassy-eyed stares?

Are they lonely from the neglect?
Are they filled with longing
To call out as I pass by,
But their sealed, threaded lips
Prevent them?

Or perhaps—by some well of hope—their smiles are genuine.
In an unceasing, undying, unfathomable kind of loyalty,
Like the faith of a child,
That every passing shadow,
Every crescendo of footsteps,
Every opening of a door,
Is the coming of their friend
To play again.

A childlike kind of loyalty,
One that we who age often forget.

The Island Where Lost Things Go



Marliese Dalton

I'm from the island where lost things go.
You obviously haven't missed me much,
since I've been lost now for decades
Don't you remember all the tea parties we had?
Or what about that time when Lucy Grace tried to wash me in the pool?
Surely you must remember that,
you refused to speak to her for days.

I still remember the first day we met,
I had a fiery red bow around my neck,
my hair was still white back then.
You and I had the best of times,
and as such I always had the prized spot,
next to you at night.

But soon you started to grow,
and more and more,
I was tossed into the corner,
out of sight and out of mind.
And then one day,
as you were getting ready for a high school dance,
I was kicked under the bed,
by a careless movement of your foot.
And that's where I lived,
for weeks and weeks.

And now I am here,
on the island where lost things go.
My fur has faded from its former sheen,
and one my ears is a little bit torn.

My eyes aren't as eager,
my smile isn't full.
But I ask you this,
do you ever remember
your antiquated teddy bear?

oil on canvas
(opposite page) •
Brianna Bjordahl
— gouache and
colored pencil on
paper • Reagan Alley

Mini-Me

Keely Hendricks

Your mini-me—
The one you dreamt up with a 1970 blue-eyed baby doll
And the abandon of your ten-year old imagination—
Now I'm here,
and my skin is much warmer and softer than that vintage plastic.

You took me home, and you felt as new and vulnerable to this world as I was.
I would cry and you cursed your ineptitude to make it stop,
But you held me against the soft vibrations of your heart
And I memorized the beat, even before I could memorize a single word.

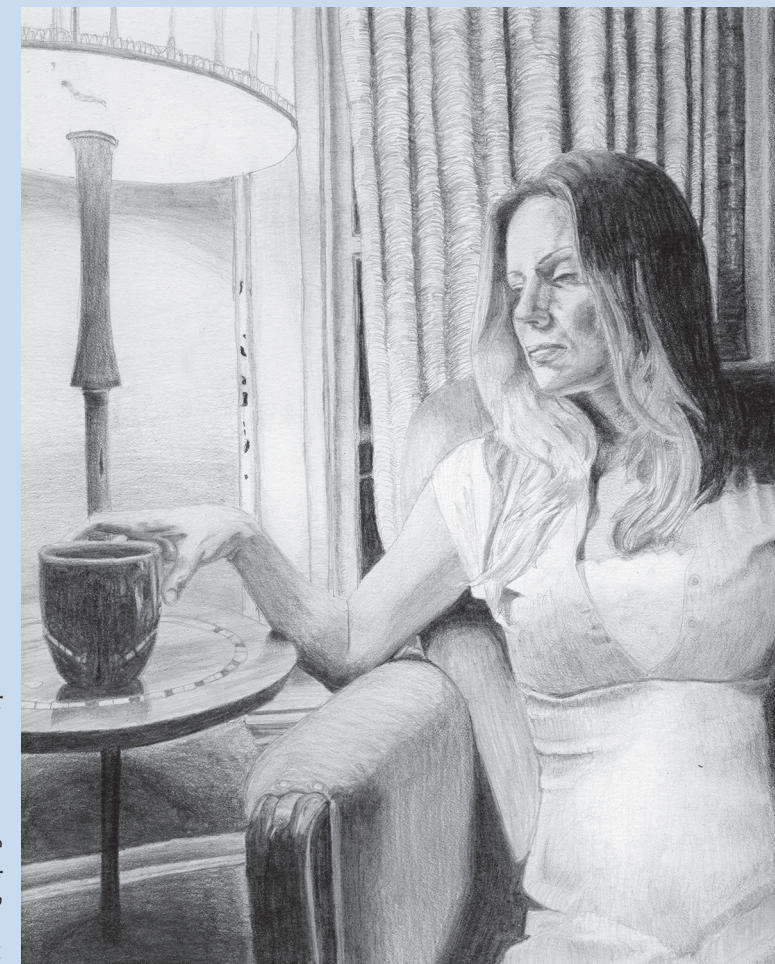
Rounding me up for bedtime
Was like capturing a wild naked Huron,
With underwear proudly upside down on my head.
When you succeeded, you rewarded my disobedience with bubbles in my bath,
And for thirty minutes our world was full of pink, sheer mirrors
That reflected our goofy smiles and got caught between our kisses.

For those young years, I was many things:
A three foot dancer, singer, soccer player, artist, and cheerleader—
I even went to computer classes.
But you took me everywhere because I could be anything.
You suffered years of stuffing my wriggling, kicking legs into pink tights and
Forcing me out from under the bleachers for cheerleading practice;
You took them with patience and silent exasperation
And hope that you were doing it right.

Time seemed to drag its feet to me,
And to you, it barely touched the ground.
Before you knew it, I was your height, your shoe size,
and my eyes had changed to your color.
The daring, wild sassy part of me, now that was all my own you said,
But I believe it was more than your shoes and shirts I grew into.

I'm sure you still doubt yourself, like you did that first day—
That confidence you had in yourself as a mother,
pushing your Sears baby-buggy down the Chicago sidewalks,
faded into the folds of Time's skin.

But laughing with you, and spending time with you,
I find myself looking into a mirror
As though we are not just two people
brought together by destiny's ingenious hand,
but a continuation of time—
a heartbeat that you gave to me,
and that I accepted.



graphite on paper • Sadie Petroitis

Connections

Memory

Kristen Barrett

I want to tell you a story. It's short and sentimental, but I think you need to hear it in order to fully understand what I really want to say to you.

Growing up, I abhorred my father and loved my mother. People say it isn't healthy to sow relationships out of hate. Good thing he was long gone before my fifth birthday. My parents were high school sweethearts, shocked out of their love by the harsh reality of mortgages and pregnancy. To cut a long story short: I grew up in a single parent family.

For the first three years, life was tough. My mother couldn't land a job with my newborn sister tied to her hip. The best she could do was a minimum wage job at Pete's, which is our town's Walgreens. We only survived out of the good graces of our neighbors, the true benefit of living in a small town.

No matter how hard my mother worked, she always cooked for us. Sometimes she wouldn't get home until 11 o'clock at night, and still we would smell the aromas of her culinary art drifting into our bedrooms. In the morning, we'd find gourmet muffins or crepes. Until I went to college, I thought all mothers were like her.

She was a gifted cook. When she donned her apron, my mother became God, and everything she made was a divine creation. Her baked goods melted in your mouth like sugar clouds, one second they're there, the next they're gone, leaving your tongue begging for more. Her soups, douses of ambrosia, warmed your insides but never burned. Her paninis, sautés, and pizzas dallied on the line between adventurous and outlandish. To her, one cooks to craft, not to eat; in fact, she cared about cooking so much that she would spend more money on food than clothing at times. And let me tell you, sometimes Bolognese pasta is more comforting than a new coat.

Out of all my mother's recipes, my absolute favorite was her award-winning chicken gumbo. Such a casual dish, but it held certain esteem in its taste. Tender bits of chicken breast immersed in mouth-watering broth, flavored with spices, onions, bell peppers, and celery. On our birthdays, my mother would allow my sister and me to pick one meal for her to cook. My sister always chose grilled peanut butter sandwiches with sugar cookies, but my stomach always craved that award-winning chicken gumbo.

Now the description "award-winning" is not self-proclaimed. That gumbo won the distinction at the pinnacle of my mother's life when her body was being eaten away by cancer. I'm proud to say that my mother is one of the few cancer victims who lived life to the very end. Naturally, she had to stop work, but not even the crippling disease could keep her from the kitchen. My sister and I were well into our teenage years by this time, so we worked hard to pay for the bills, chemo treatments, and ingredients.

One day, my mother came to us with a special request: she wanted to enter the city's annual soup contest. Despite her knack for cooking, she had never entered a contest, probably for pride's sake. To my delight, she wanted her final hoorah to be my favorite, the chicken gumbo.

The day before the contest, my mother toiled away in the kitchen, wheeling around in her chair with empowering gusto. Watching her cook was almost as sensational as eating her food. She maneuvered herself around our cramped kitchen, mixing sauces, dicing vegetables, and singing "My Favorite Things." My mother always had this thing for Julie Andrews, you see. But anyway, when she finished, my sister and I lugged the giant pot into the fridge, and our triumphant mother retired to bed at four o'clock in the afternoon.

The following day—contest day—we packed the pot of gumbo into the back of our pitiful truck and zoomed off to our city's park. Foodies crowded the contest space and cooks bragged about their shoo-in soups. Wheeling through them all, my mother had this glowing beam on her face, feeling like she was with her kind, I suspect.

We set up on an empty patch of grass, just me, my sister, my mother, a cheap table, and the chicken gumbo. One by one, deadpan judges stopped at our humble station, tasted the gumbo, wrote a quick note, and sauntered away. Unaccustomed to the stoic nature of competition, we all concluded that they didn't like the gumbo. We were not expecting it all when my mother's chicken gumbo won first place!

With a bright smile on her face, my mother wheeled up to the winner's circle. They gave her this little plaque that read, "Best Soup in Southwick Valley," which she held up in the air like an Olympic athlete flaunting a gold medal. It was, hands-down, the best day of her life. Even now, I still wonder if the prize was a gift from our town, but does it really matter?

A few months later, my mother passed away. Thankfully, she went quietly, painlessly. My mother lived a grueling life, but she left our world with only best wishes and her culinary talent. Her last words were of love and prayer.

Alas, my sister and I are not any good in the kitchen. The best I can do is toast bread. Thus, we've vowed to carry on her legacy in other ways. I am a food critic, and she owns various high-brow food establishments across America.

I believe that everyone is searching for something missing in their lives. For me, I've been restlessly looking for her soup, hoping that maybe one day I'll walk into a restaurant, sit down, ask for their best dish, and in half an hour or so they'll place my mother's award-winning soup in front of me, and you, sir, have done just that. Congratulations.

A Toast to Trust

Carolyn Edwards

*This essay was written from the point of view of the author's mother,
capturing the mother's experience of alcoholism in the home.*

A hardship license, so I could drive my three younger siblings to school. The lock on my bedroom door—the only means of separation. The bottle I found in the linen closet when I was looking for a towel. Never having a single friend over to my house. The split. These are my memories of being a teenager. It was 1976 when I first donned the plaid, and it was only a year later that I donned a new face, as well. Back in those days, I was afraid to show weakness. Silence was my only weapon, so I internalized my problems behind a façade in fear of being ridiculed. I was the oldest, after all. I had to remain strong for my sister and brothers, or so I thought. Years later, I finally realized what a fool I had been. The mantra of “growing up” permeates our teenage years, and we often buy into the message by acting untouchable. However, when we use what we believe to be courage in order to rationalize the act of burying our feelings, we lose not only ourselves but also the opportunity to form trusting relationships with our peers.

It was summer, and I turned thirteen. My parents gave me my own phone line and receiver for my birthday, so I no longer had to talk to my boyfriend or classmates in the kitchen. I was ecstatic. But while I was getting older, my mom was acting more and more like a child. The screams would start up at night. My father tried. He really did, but even he couldn't stop her. Eventually, he would give up, exasperated, and lock himself in his own room. My siblings and I would do the same; however, those thin, wooden doors could not block out the sound. The yells and banging filled the otherwise silent rooms, shaking the very foundation of both the house and our family. If a friend from school called me on my phone, an act which became more infrequent over time, I was petrified that the sound of my drunken mother would give me away. They couldn't know. So, I would twist the latch, pry open the window, and dangle the phone outside. Quietly climbing over the window frame next to the stretched cord, I would stand huddled against the brick wall of my house, feigning composure as I talked. My face was hard to maintain, but embarrassment and fear were powerful motivators.

High school began in the fall, and what were supposed to be the best years of my life started with more pretending. My mom was late picking me up one day, and as the hours waned and the school slowly emptied, I became worried. I assumed she had forgotten me completely, but when her car finally screeched to a stop in front of me and I climbed into the backseat, I could smell the alcohol on her breath. I should have known. I sunk to the floorboards of the car, hoping that if my mom wrecked, I would be safer down there—hidden. As she began to pull away, I saw one of my classmates staring. I crouched even lower, my cheeks flushed with shame. Fighting tears, I whispered a brief prayer for one of the first times in a long time. God, don't let me die. Protect me, and protect my secret. They can't know.

Christmas rolled around a few months later, but what should have been a joyous family



b&w photograph (film) • Taylor Farrington

holiday quickly took a turn for the worse. On Christmas Eve, family members gathered at our place. She had one too many glasses and began stumbling around in a garish fashion. She was in such a state that she tripped and fell into our glass coffee table, cutting open her knee. The lively festivities halted at once, and we children were shocked into a scared silence. As she lay on the ground in hysterics with blood rolling off her leg, my face reddened, hot with anger and humiliation both for and because of her. The ambulance came shortly thereafter, and the then quiet Christmas Eve unfolded into a quiet Christmas. She sat in a chair the entire next day with her bandaged leg propped up—a stoic and taciturn version of the brash mother we had come to know. As I studied her that morning, I made a promise to myself. I would never become like her. I would never lose my life to alcohol. I would never abandon my kids for induced happiness. But most importantly, I would never let my classmates find out. That failed holiday—yet another disappointment—hardened my heart and solidified the face I had come to adorn.

The divorce was finalized during my sophomore year, and I could no longer ignore the fact that my family had fallen apart. People inevitably found out, and nothing I did stopped it. While the burden of putting on a face had slightly eased, I was still embarrassed to reveal the true nature of the divorce. By hiding my problems, I alienated many of my closest friends from middle school. I thought I was being strong, but in actuality, I was unbearably insecure. Fear prevented me from having real courage, the kind needed to confess to someone what was going on at home. My lack of self-confidence also caused me to spend almost the entirety of my high school years in a relationship. I used my boyfriends as a way to increase my self-esteem and distract myself from not only my alcoholic mother but also my lack of close friends at school. I did not push myself academically because I did not want to draw attention to myself. I worked to please others and remain anonymous, so much so that I lost myself along the way, almost in the same way my mother was losing her own sense of self.

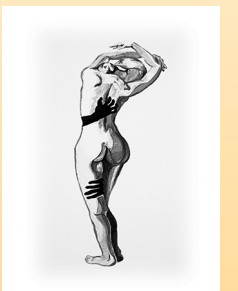
Addiction is scary. It took my mother, and in turn, it caused me to prepare a face for the faces that I met. My father was a blessing. Although my mother was not awake when I got up for school, my father was there to make breakfast and send me on my way. But I put on a face in front of him, too, attempting to prove that I was unaffected. My youngest brother has told me that I was like a mother to him, but I have often wondered if he could see through my act. It took me years after high school to regain my identity—my outlets, my loves, my aspirations. I have not completely abandoned the promise I made to myself that silent Christmas. I am different from my own mother. I know how to drink responsibly. I enjoy a glass of wine on occasion, but I do not use alcohol to cope with my problems. I use people. I tell my own kids that they should not underestimate the importance of a confidant, and that trusting people enough to be open with them is the essence of strength. Insecurity has not left me; however, I am closer to my siblings than I ever have been before and am finally able to utilize their support. In the end, though, it is only me who can take off the mask, who can make the conscious decision to validate myself and lift others up along the way. So let us toast to teens. Let us raise our glasses to the girl hiding outside her house as she talks on the phone, the girl crouching on the floorboards of a car for safety, and the girl watching as her mom is carried away in an ambulance. Let us toast to that girl and all the rest in the hopes that they, like all of us, can learn to let their guard down.

21 or 22, He Didn't Care

Keely Hendricks

Our feet make little sinks in the grass, crisscrossing as we walk;
You curl your lip, and I quickly look down, smiling with my mouth closed.
The way the dying light shines through your eyes makes them lose their murkiness
And they glint like the smooth wet back of a snake.
It looks like a god left his fingerprints
In the crease of your neck, the part between your lips.
The heat vibrates like power lines,
It shakes your image into jagged white pieces;
My brain swells and pounds its fists against my skull;
You pull me closer, I smile—
I wonder if they know we left, if they know the way the swamp
Sneaks out of town and loses itself.
Cigarette dangling off your James Dean lips,
Tattoo escaping your sleeve,
You said, "Let's get lost, I know a place."
I followed after checking my hair in the grimy bathroom mirror;
My friends didn't see, fussing with the fakes and arguing 21 or 22
And walking with you, to this place you want to show me,
I'm glad I hid my braces behind blood red lips;
I'm getting lightheaded, and the sky is leaning on me like a drunkard.
You blame the heat
But now time is confused and I see mother pulling out of the driveway,
You coming closer
Putting on my older sister's dress, stuffing my bra—
You coming closer
Walking out of the dingy bar with a handsome stranger at my hip
You
and a drink;
The heat is taking its sweaty palm and stuffing my face in it,
Covering my mouth with its puffy fingers;
The dullness in my veins, it makes you look like an angel
Who's taking me away.
My eyes crisscross before I sink in the grass

graphite on paper • Charlotte Hughes



A Voicemail

Grace Hawkins

Hey it's me, and
I'm sorry for everything
That happened earlier.
It's just that I've been feeling
Alone and helpless lately.
I don't know what I'm
Supposed to do or say anymore.
Nothing seems to be going right,
Not with you, not with us,
Or friends, or family,
Or anything.
My life seems to have shattered;
The shards slicing past me,
Out of control,
Past my grasp.
Everything is falling apart
And I'm lost.

But of course, this is only
What I'm thinking—so I'll
Just leave a little lie
After the beep.

After the Tone

Calliope Hubbell

Who's to blame,
If the empty crackling of the phone
Has become my favorite noise,
And the answering tone the most hated?

But twisting my fingers
In the telephone cord
Is just not the same
As lacing them with yours.

The spiders in the back of my mind
Have tied up the ends
Of their sentimental webs,
Like you've tied up the line.

And the problem with our fights, dear,
Is that we don't realize:
We aren't sharing the blame,
We're playing tug-of-war with it.

And so far,
we're both losing.



b&w photograph (film) • Olivia Caldwell



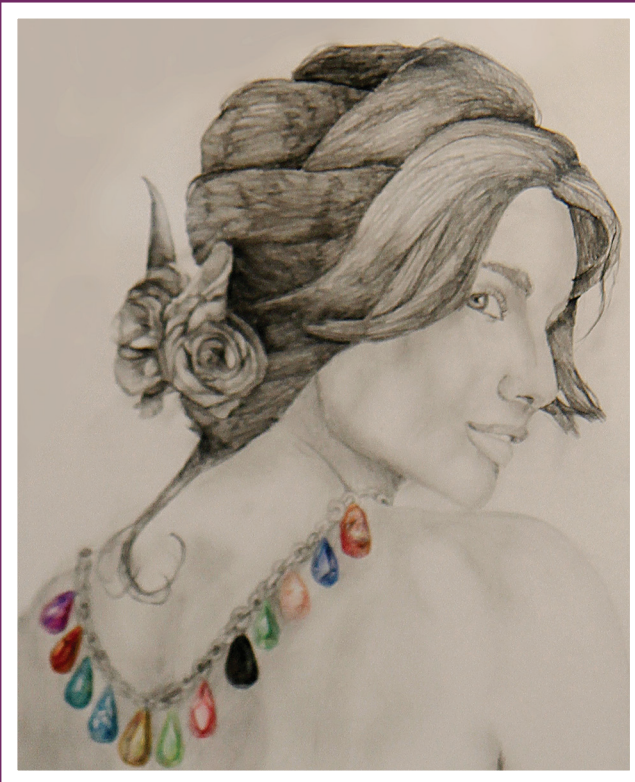
Heartbeat

Grace Hawkins

Sometimes, as I lay in bed at night,
I like to pretend that
You're lying in the bed with me,
As if I could just reach my hand out
Just the slightest bit,
And my fingertips would be able to
Brush the middle of your back.

I can almost feel your warmth,
And as I inch closer
To nuzzle into you,
I realize that it isn't so,
That you're miles away by now
Off on a life of your own.

And I am left alone in the bed,
The one that we never shared,
But the one where my heart craved
To hear yours beating in sync
In the cool of the night.



graphite and colored pencil on paper • Hoyley Cammons

The More I Stared

Dane Setzer

The more I stared at her hair,
The more the knots
Began to look like nooses.
I was worried
She would see my desire
To hang from them.

For You

Reagan Alley

For you, sweet
For the petals of you
Soft breezes that tumble me into enchantment
For us, time
For oil-slicked memories
Seconds that slip through my fumbling fingers
For me, breath
Is something to bargain with
Hitching my lungs on the edge of your smile
For life, gone
For each dismal morning
For every sleepless night I dread the dawn
And sun, warm
Scornful and honest
Light that lays bare every surface not torn
For all, pain
For rain never cleansing
Days that go by when I can't hold the wheel
For all that I've known
For each passing moment
Each thought that you steal and the promises broken
Your smell in the sunlight, your taste in the snow
The flush on your cheeks when the bitter winds blow
Poison and wine but the truth still remains:
I've seen all the world and I've seen you the same

Art

Metal Instruments



Megan Derwenskus

Last year I shot six people—
toyed with them,
asked them questions,
before telling them to freeze.
Finally, I took the last longing, lingering glance,
knowing I would not see them again—
until the film was developed.

Post-Show Depression

Emily Stewart

In my mind,
I can picture a memory.
I can see it, feel it, and remember it
as if it were occurring this moment.
I can embody the excitement I felt at the time,
and will never forget the warm embraces of congratulations.

These memories have a certain smell:
Of musky mothballs, perspiration, hairspray, and makeup.
Of joy, laughter, camaraderie, and happiness.
The sensation only briefly lingers after it is all over.
My purpose now gone, thanks to the fleeting nature of this ephemeral art.

I can only reminisce.
Though I long to relive the sheer ecstasy,
I am forced instead to accept the bitter melancholy,
And turn my head to look toward the future
Rather than dwelling on the past.
My head rings with the clichéd tones of those around me who do not understand.
They say, "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened."
They cannot fathom that I have just lost a friend.

intaglio on paper (opposite page) • Augusta Bowhay
b&w photograph (film) with digital sepia effect • Rachel Miller

Writing It Down

Lauryn McSpadden

She lay in bed thinking
So lost in her thoughts
As usual, that she forgot to notice all the beauty still around her.
There was the letter her two best friends wrote her that year
The ones she pushed away.
There was the poster that everyone signed
On that last day of one of the best weeks of her life
One of the only weeks she felt like a part of something
Beneath her fingers, lay the keys on which she typed this poem—
The keys that led her into expressing these things in the first place
And she had heard of sonder and nodus tollens but never quite accepted these ideas
And she begged for more than this life
This perfect life.
She begged for the real things like adventure, and excitement, and love.
She knew it was foolish and selfish
But she wanted to run out at night with friends
Who would never judge her
And light things on fire. And fall for the bad boy, who
Changed for her. And she wanted to climb fences and feel the adrenaline
Of being a teenager and doing something wrong because it felt right.
She wanted to live until all that was left
Was ashes because the light in her burned so bright
It could do nothing but explode.
And she knew she was dreaming.
Because in her inbox was a message from her teacher
About her English project that was half her grade
And she remembered that she has an algebra test to study for
And a term paper to write.
And she filled her life with all of these extras
Because she was trying to fill the holes left by the absence of the real things.
And she wrote these thoughts down on paper, because these were the real things
The real thoughts, and just because she had no one to tell
Didn't mean they weren't worth telling.

This is the World of Dance

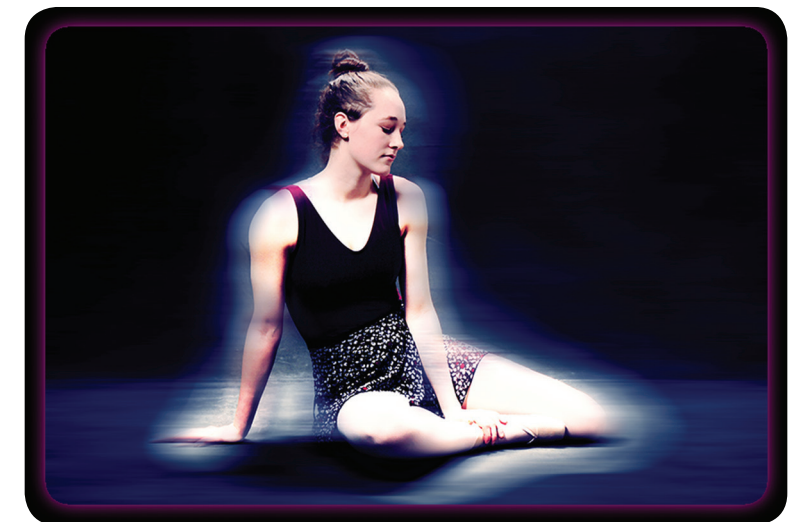
Grace Hawkins

There I was, standing in a room,
Full of mirrors and bright lights,
With looming images of other girls around me,
And all of us, wearing almost nothing, each curve
And bend and muscle of our bodies on display,
Critiqued by ourselves—and I can feel
The warm, sticky hands of shame creep across
My small face.

Terrified, my eyes widen as a door to my left opens:
In walks our instructor who has us line up
And repeat exercises until we are all
Perfectly in sync.

Imagine, humor me in this moment, and imagine.
Imagine this being your life for thirteen years.
A chosen life, don't mistake me.
I chose to live in this world of constant tendus and pirouettes.

This world is the world of dance.



digital art • Kennedy Potts

Won't You Stay for Tea?

Devin Graham

read in the voice of Winifred Cheshire



Crumpets, tea, and satin gloves
Cakes and sweets made with love.
Painted faces with rosy cheeks
Smiling lips, full and meek.
Crisp folds in starched white dresses
Time with my dollies I find precious.
The sweetest perfumes fill the air:
They're sprayed in my dollies' hair.
A twinge of bitter hits my nose;
That's the formaldehyde, I suppose.

gouache paint on paper (opposite) • Sadie Petraitis



Places

Recoleta

Catherine Falls

The flash of sun catches my eye; I've been wandering through the cemetery since this morning in search of that one elusive photo that can be described as art. The tall mausoleums send their spindly peaks to the sky and shatters the winter rays of light that peek out over the treetops. What little sunlight survives the journey to the ground is feeble and entirely unsuitable for photographs. As expected, no art has dropped in my lap.

Quite unexpectedly, the sunlight moves and dives under the altar of the Valdez family mausoleum.

Crouched on the floor of the open crypt—exposed to the light on perhaps the first occasion since it has been built—is a diminutive, dark-haired man waging sanitary battle against a coffin. With each swipe of the polishing cloth, his bright yellow, enameled fingernails sweep across the dark wood in a mesmerizing pattern. A well-loved bucket of cleaning supplies rests on one corner of the cracked marble floor, and mops are strewn just out of sight beneath the mausoleum's floor.

Those nails blur at the corner of my vision, and I'm again struck by the impression of sunlight reflecting off of the coffin's finish.

I clear my throat. He doesn't flinch.

With some trepidation, I lean over the opened crypt, my shoes inelegantly pulverizing some of the dead flowers strewn around the grate. "Hello?"

He doesn't answer, and I wonder if his solitary occupation makes him less inclined to converse with the more demanding warm bodies of the cemetery. I decide to try again in my mangled tourist's Spanish.

"Excuse me. Perdón? ¿Puedo sacar una foto?" Can I take a photo?

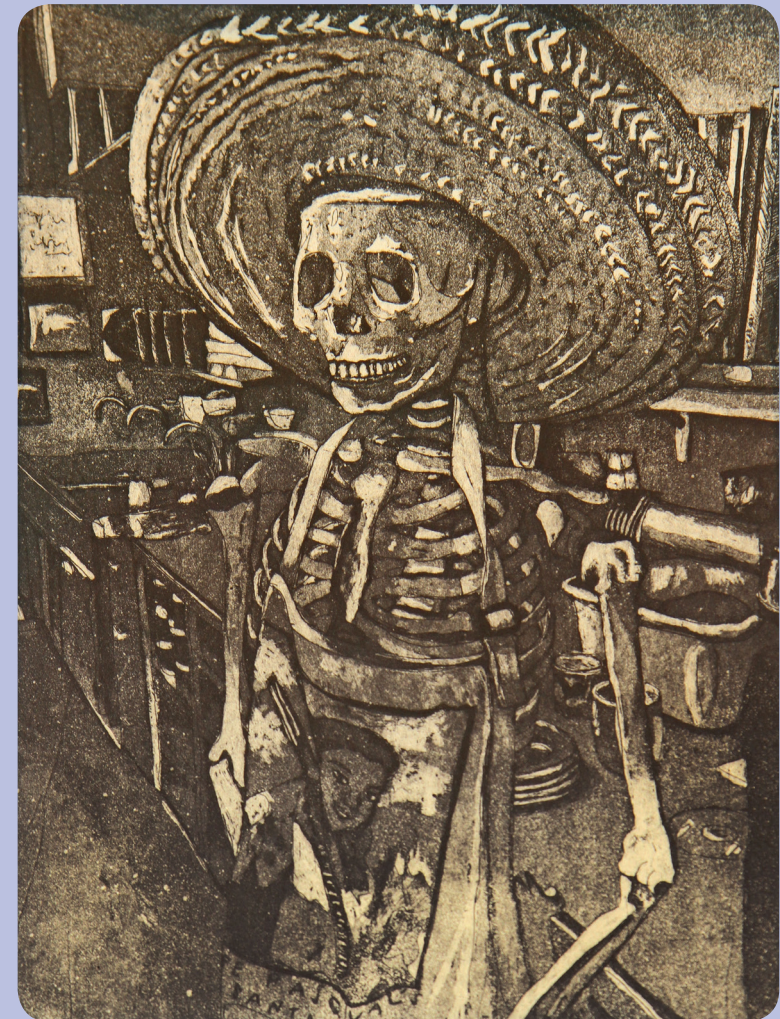
He leans back, the rag dropping onto the first coffin to display those ridiculously yellow nails. An exquisitely weathered face is presented to me, and I am shocked not only by the wrinkled expanse of skin on an otherwise middle-aged man but also by his clear, pale eyes. His expression is both serene and somewhat incredulous that anyone—much less a camera-toting tourist of the variety most often seen from the safe remove of buses—is disturbing his work. One side of his mouth quirks, highlighting deep lines in his tanned skin. His precise wording is lost in translation, but his tone seems amused. "Why not? Maybe you can put it in a travel magazine, yes?"

I think that there's something vaguely insulting about the suggestion, but I shrug, muttering some embarrassed, half-castellano nonsense while unloading my camera. Its familiar shape presents itself to my fingers, and I adjust the focus to capture his hands, which find the rag and resume their methodical sweeps of the coffin's surface.

Throughout the duration of the shutter's clicks, he seems—or at least pretends to be—oblivious to my intense focus on his work and ignores me in an unjustifiably tranquil manner.

When I've satisfied my photographic desires, I re-pack the camera and turn back to him. My next words are addressed to his thick shock of black hair. "Thank you for letting me photograph you."

A shrug and a muffled sentence disappear into the depths of the crypt, and the neon fingernails are back, flashing in the sunlight on the polished wood of Maria Valdez's remains.



etching print on paper • Nava Shaw



Clouds

Emily Stewart

Waves of scrambled eggs, ice bergs, and suspended cotton swabs blanket the sky.

From below, they form pictures:

An animal maybe, like a mouse or a dog

Or even an alien or dragon if you use your imagination.

From above they are a landscape of their own:

Hills and peaks of mountains, rippling deserts.

Images whose dimensions and depth and beauty cannot be appreciated from the ground.

It takes man's invention to appreciate one of God's most beautiful, untainted creations.

To marvel in the magical, celestial world of water vapor,

We must experience the mundanity of man, and his invention designed for the sole purpose of
quick and easy travel.

An invention whose very expediency might intend to bypass reflection and meditation.

The clouds are there for those who are looking and care enough to notice.

They inspire and intrigue me,

But when I am in their midst, there is nothing to see but pea soup fog.

Are they merely an illusion?

The Voyager

Shelby Potter

I was born to the Mother

In one year of the serpent;

Likewise, I left Her in

a combustion of flames ardent

I left quickly to pass by the

Scarlet power of blood and war and ...

yet I was simply a wide-eyed bystander.

I had left from the beauty, my true homeland

I passed from war and was drawn

to king and queen of something I would never truly convey

continued to the brothers, one wrong, one right

I was cracked and faded, yet they led me astray

I am old; where am I, oh Mother?

these connections are cracking; I can feel you no longer!

And from the distance, god of death sang to darkness

"Oh brave Voyager, your golden record will soon be forgotten!"

- On the life of Voyager 1: 1977-2013

b&w photograph (film) • Liza Hach

Seoul

Erin Suh

This is the Seoul of my ancestors.

This is the Seoul of my grandfather—

My mother’s Seoul.

Though this is where my hair blends in—

No longer sticking out, jet black in a mélange of browns and yellows,

and where the sounds and foods of my home

Manifest themselves outside of our door,

Seoul is not mine.

This is the city where my tongue rolls awkwardly

Struggling to stray from the familiarity of the ABCs.

My manners miss the mark,

My duality all too stark.

This is the Seoul of my grandfather—

My mother’s Seoul.

My Eight-Year Journey

Ash Lanquist

I once was sent upon a quest
with danger and treasure
odyssey and a great beast to defeat.

I was sent upon this adventure
by a wise woman robed in white,
gesturing with kind eyes.

At the start of this
I planned to complete it alone—
for all the stories I had heard
as a child taught me
that companions only hindered
you from your task—that
no success was found in
the arms of erratic allies.

But by the time the beast was slain,
I found I had failed in retaining
solitude, and that I had obtained
a great many friends along the way.

I met a Princess, whose
greatest interest was in the stars,
and a queen of Pear groves
who enjoyed a good discussion.
I met a Couple of Bards who
actually were a couple.
I met a band of Ballerinas
who danced brilliantly in the air.

I met a band of men—friends
with one of the two Bards—
who were merry indeed, from
the tall man with the Guitar to
the Man Who Knows All.
I met an Artist whose paintings

make the strongest weep,
and a woman who—for Ninety Six years—
lived with the face of a teenage girl.

I met an Amazonian Warrior
with a knack for science, and
a woman whose stern affect
intimidated me in our first encounter,
but who later I found to be quite kind.

I met a girl with the Voice of a Bird,
and a man who always is Uncomfortable,
and a Dark Ruler with a clever wit,
and a set of Twins—one a Dancer,
the other a Scientist—who love
the same music and the same jokes.
I met a hyper young girl
who gives the best Hugs,
and a Romantic with a dash of sarcasm,
and a Mentor with a Way with Words.

I met all of these people and more.

On my journey home from my quest
I tried to count them all, but
I lost the number somewhere past
five hundred and eighty eight.
I had lost touch with some, and
I'm sure others still with share that ending,
but many will remain in my story.

When my task was complete,
and when I had returned to my home,
And when I looked into the mirror
for the first time in almost a decade,
I saw a changed person.



*digitally altered photograph of Harpeth Hall educator Tony 'Baba Dass Sunrise' Springman
used with the subject's permission*

Social Commentary

On Seeing a Woman at the Greek Festival

Obi Ananaba

Her hair is golden blonde
the fried strands artfully curled into
limpid ringlets.

Her olive skin glimmers in the aggressively lit bazaar,
deep cracks slowly surfacing at her eyes and mouth
as her lips curl around what could have
—would have—
been a smile
years ago, before it was worn
every day like a threadbare cloak
to guard against the iciness of life.

What could have been a smile
lifetimes ago
stretches up toward brown soulful eyes that search the crowds
as if by rote, fruitlessly,
obsessively seeking out something
More.

A breeze blows and she pulls her emotions in closer,
wrapping them tightly around her shoulders
in a worn, grey cardigan
knowing what bruises feel like,
having memorized the taste of age.

gouache print on bristol paper (background image) • Madeline Woodward

Her Destruction

Kate Goldenring

Your mountain peaks
Sheeted with the erect grass
My feet yearned to hear crumple
Like a sharp exhale of breath

Your cave
With a barrier of dark ivy
The purest of greens
Flapping over the entrance
My horns perked up and aligned.
My hoof kicked up dust.

Your mountains are canyons now,
Hollowed by footprints.
Your cave is unadorned blackness.
Not a single leaf clings to the mouth.

So now they explore a brown landscape
Each step layering bruises
Where is she?
A green cape flutters in the distance.
We all charge.

photograph (film with digital color tone) opposite page • Reagan Abernathy





Breather

Julia Warner

Whenever life becomes too much
And I start to fray around the ends,
I look up at the stars.
To see the night sky speckled with light,
And know that I am staring across space and time,
Fills me with a joy so vast it is almost painful.
The child inside me emerges and shows me how to wonder again.
I lose myself in that infinite sea,
And every little anxiety crumbles into dust.

Yes

Vivian Herzog

Every year the people ask if I've been good. They want to know if the big man in the red suit with the beard as fluffy as pillows and as white as eggshells will bring me pretty things wrapped in pretty boxes. They want to know if the big man with the kind eyes and the hearty laugh will eat my mother's homemade cookies and feed his reindeer with my lawn. They want to know if the big man with clunky black boots and the white-tipped hat will tiptoe in, as still and quiet as the snowflakes outside.

Every year I tell them yes. I nod shyly and smile from under my lashes. Yes, I have been a good little girl. I say yes to the woman in the parking lot outside the restaurant, yes to the sales clerk in the drugstore. Yes to the kind lady in the grocery store and yes to the pushy employee in the mall. Yes to the countless others who ask. Yes.

They don't know what I know. They don't know that there is no towering tree illuminating our living room. No stockings leisurely hanging over our crackling fireplace. No green and red lights twinkling around our bushes outside. And certainly no big man in the red suit with the kind eyes and hearty laugh and beard as fluffy as pillows and as white as eggshells. But I nod and smile and say yes. I tell them yes, because there is no need to see their hopeful and hopeful faces fall in discomfort. I tell them yes, because there is no need to make it harder than it already is.

Media

Ella McKenzie

Why must you bombard me so
with your pink and glowing skin,
with the lies
that surround me and the stench like floral antiseptic
and drums,
the great clanging as I lie in bed and try
to sleep,
but I can't
because the
stage lights
shine in my eyes and
your noise
presses my eyes open
and soon enough

we are all blind.



colored pencil and graphite on paper • Hayley Gammons

Personalities



oil on canvas with woden harnesses and necklaces • Hayley Gammons

Fifth Generation

Keely Hendricks

When I was ten, I stole my first cigarette out of Father's saddlebag

And lit it up on the hay bales with the other farmers' sons

We were all hiding

Some of us from banging a dusty pail against our red, chapped knees

And calling in Costică, the black pig who had small eyes and chalky toes, to supper

Others hiding from helping their raw-handed mothers clean the vegetables

With stern faces bundled in white scarves

The cigarettes tasted sour and stunk up the barn,

But we smoked them, and threw hay at the ones who choked

When I was sixteen, I took on manhood with stupid alacrity

And joined the older boys in the sugar beet fields

I hoped the ropes would strengthen my hands like Father's

The little ones watched me jealously, and went back

To bitterly bang their bony knees with feeding pails and call in the pigs

The first time I lit up in front of the other farmers, leaning on the plow,

I felt like I had earned something eternal

The younger kids watched me with pout-lipped envy, then slunk back to the barn

What I didn't realize, was that I had indeed earned something eternal

I didn't see how the plow aged my hands,

Made my fingers like the sole of a boot, and my face like the other men's faces

Forty years of carving these fields left furrows in our brows as deep as the ones in the ground.

I guess I never noticed that,

There will always be more sugar beets, kids with sharp-boned stomachs

Who scrape their knees with pails and smoke in the barn

There has been no drought of ugly black pigs with chalky feet

And red-faced mothers bundled in naframias who yell and scrub vegetables in plastic basins

No end to the desperate fathers who make their sons men

And sons who believe them

I grin and pull out my cigarette—there has been no end to these either

I suck in the fumes like it is my breath,

Because I've learned that their air is sweeter

When we sit on our plows and take fervent drags,

No one throws hay at each other, because we're men, and we don't cough anymore

That's one thing that's changed

The Divine and the Profane

Catherine Falls

Forgive me, darling, for I have sinned
My last confession, made to the piles of ashes that were your dreams

It was beautiful, while it lasted
The endless parade of bread and circuses

We laughed
Because in the low, seductive light of the smoke-filled rooms where
You twined your arms with eager sycophants and I

Watched from the table at the center
Our armor was our apathy, our shields
The rictus grins of thinly veiled scorn

For the bumbling clowns
Pulled in by the nighttime glitter of the castle of cards that
We built, to keep us from crashing down to earth
We had them all under our thumbs, you and I

My sins—
For after the lights came on,
Our castle was no more than a pile of rejected playbills and torn cocktail attire

My final confession—
This parade was only for me
I built my walls of opulence to keep you close
Because as soon as the lights come on
You will disappear, and I'll be left alone, in a prison of my own creation

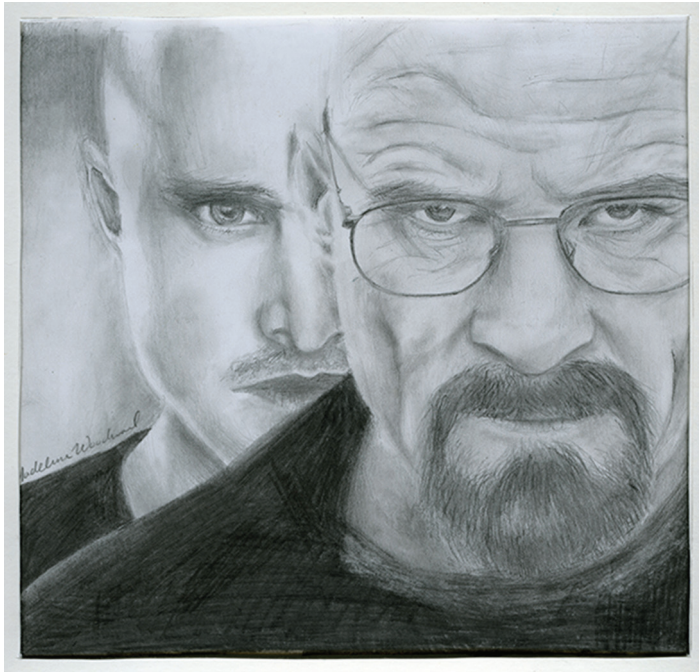
b&w photograph from film (opposite) • Asha Collins



Creating Walter White

Annika Brakebill

In the voice of Vince Gilligan



graphite on bristol paper • Madeline Woodward

I was already thinkin', boy, I'm gonna have the world's worst mid-life crisis.
But I gave it to someone else.
When I was out of work,
I figured I'd be a good greeter at Wal-Mart.
Instead, I became a meth cook overnight.
Out of the blue, I'm reprehensible—
and what interested me was,
what drives a rule-follower like me to break bad?
Why shouldn't I go rob a bank, especially if I'm smart enough to get away with it?
What's stopping me?

I've never tried meth, neither had Walt.

We'd hardly ever jaywalked.
He toiled his life away teaching kids who didn't give a sh—t
and got a plate of veggie bacon from his pregnant wife on his 50th birthday.
Despite the banality, in the pilot he's still passive
like me, too timid to try out his id in broad daylight,
so really it's the cancer that does it.
(I didn't have cancer,
just a writer's dry spell in Hollywood.)
Cancer and his jackass boss at the carwash,
his sh—y second job.

But anyway, it was really the transformation that fascinated me.
Chemistry is... well, technically it's the study of matter, but
I prefer to see it as the study of change.
The first man I killed in self-defense,
with red phosphorus and adrenaline,
holding my breath and so scared I nearly p—ssed myself.
The second was self-defense, too, maybe.
But once you're in, once you're Heisenberg,
it's all self-defense until you let a girl drown in her own vomit.
When you find yourself there, you can do anything
as long as you have the right actors, directors, and marketing.
I love the moment where we revealed the severed head on the tortoise.
And then the severed head turned out to be booby trapped and it blew up.

Who is Walter White?
Well, he's me, I guess. At first.
Bryan does an excellent job of making you really root for him.
But at what point does he become this monster?
I think I stopped cheering for Walt a little while before the fans.
I break bad on the page and in the writer's room
where I can blow a man's face off and get an Emmy for it.
Just like Walt, I'm a perfectionist, a pessimist.
But unlike him, I'm still a coward,
and I'm pretty handy with a fake smile.



Cosmic Blindness: A Posthumous Account by Dr. TJ Eckleburg

Lauren Grace Himes

From High Above, the view is unparalleled.

A timeless history is
woven delicately amongst the stars in a
a majestic and glorious display.

The story presses upon you like a heartbeat
urging you to join in its poetic melody.

But you refused to contribute a verse.

I rid the world of broken spectacles and faulty vision,
Gave sight to the blind, a restoration of hope
And yet, the battered corpses still wander aimlessly
amidst shining lights, puppets of their drunken stupor.

Torn between tattered rags and empty bottles,
you close your eyes to the wreckage you have created.
Clouds of dust seep endlessly around you
A saturating blackness,
Decorating the empty corners of rooms once abandoned,
Filling the space between one sentence and the next.

The darkness overtakes the garish lighting and flutters
hopelessly downward like puffs of ash.
All they notice is a dim reflection,
the sparkling menagerie of false dreams.

Blurred by the ashen mist of the ghosts of yesterday
And the bitter remains of tomorrow,
Each day is a continuation of the last.

Can it be any more obvious?
You and your petty comparisons and ignorant assumptions.
Your detailed lists and insignificant descriptions,
All as meaningless as the glass castle that stands tall
Above the glittering lake—
the mirror that buries secrets within its the depths.

Sight is more than it might appear to be.

To see
Is to gain unending knowledge
To absorb, to penetrate
To be within and *without*,
without
Disturbing a thing.

True sight requires observation with a purpose,
Experience and wisdom,
A heart to discern the real from the invented.
Sight can only be found when one relinquishes bias, prejudice,
Any form of prejudgment, really—

It is impossible to see these days—unless, of course,
you are blind.

b&w photograph (film, darkroom alteration) • KK Rechter

George

Catherine Falls

The first thing I remember
Is the gentle lapping of the sitar at the edges
Of my small world—when
My mother sat in her Liverpool house and dreamed
Of a moonlit Ganges and Hindu princesses
Fingers on dappled wood to create the sounds that drove me to music
Like a dying man to God

I didn't follow my father, the way my teachers, my friends, Liverpool said I would
I followed the music—my lifeblood—instead to India
And took a detour through the glittering world of American pop in the process
At fourteen, spilling my soul to the upper deck of
A crowded bus, to the applause and acceptance of my three other halves
Who ultimately knew me more intimately than Pattie or Olivia.

"Beatlemania," they called it—
The madness that compelled millions of people to flood our concerts,
Screaming our names to fill their own voids
For John, Ringo, and Paul, it may have been the fame
But for me... for me, I only wanted the rest of the world to hear the sounds of my madness
I was mad, you see, about the music
But the world used us as an excuse to go mad
The crashing noise of celebrity broke upon my head, and broke the heads of others
And in the quiet of my mind and heart,
I didn't hear the roar of crowds or the talk show host's questions
I heard my own salvation, nirvana—the exotic-familiar sounds of tumbaknaer and sarod.

India: my first and lasting romance
And the mysticism that outlasted two marriages, two bands, and myself
The music followed us there, as did the publicity and the cameras and the mad, mad crowds
When I reached the country of my heart, I was
Dismayed to find it claimed by the lasting imprint of my own country
Yet—
I couldn't help but weep—where my three other halves and the cameras couldn't see—
Because it was everything that I had imagined
And more
Because when you've seen beyond yourself, then you may find
Peace of mind is waiting there
That's what I—what all of us Beatles—could never do
To see beyond what was ultimately our own narcissism and
Four boys

Four British boys whose dreams stretched from the coal-blackened roofs of England
Across the shining seas to a jungle of darkened mystery
No less faded by relentless march of the West
And to our fans, who followed us
Through the decades, through the sitar and tumbaknaer and sarod of my—our—minds
We followed our long and winding road to
The end
Which, as all good Hindus know,
Is only the beginning

digital photograph • Elizabeth LeBleu

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The staff of Hallmarks would like to dedicate this year's edition to our beloved Head of School, Ms. Ann Teaff, who is retiring after sixteen years of exemplary leadership.



*aquatint —
etching on
paper •
Sarah Mulloy*

To hold your song
In a room full of strangers
Can suffocate you

-Briley Newell

